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NMC Policy Letter

From: Commanding Officer, U. S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center
To: Distribution

Subj: APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS LEADING TO CERTIFICATION AS A RATING
FORMING PART OF A NAVIGATIONAL WATCH

1. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW) requires that every rating forming part of a navigational watch (RFPNW) be certificated to perform such duties. This requirement applies to RFPNW on a seagoing vessel of 500 gross tons (GT) (tonnage measured in accordance with the International Tonnage Convention and equivalent to 200 gross register tons [GRT] measured under the domestic tonnage scheme). It excludes ratings under training and ratings whose duties are of an unskilled nature. One method of obtaining this certification is to complete approved special training which includes an approved period of seagoing service.

2. The requirements of STCW Regulation II/4, paragraph 2 for special training leading to certification as an RFPNW have three essential, linked components: special training, either ashore or aboard ship; a period of approved seagoing service; and assessments of competency. Training institutions wishing to submit a RFPNW program for Coast Guard approval must definitively establish both the training and assessments that will be accomplished during the period of special training and during the period of approved seagoing service.

3. Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular 5-95, *Guidelines for Organizations Offering Coast Guard Approved Courses*, sets forth the requirements for submission of information for approval of the special training portion to be accomplished while under the direct tutelage of the training provider. Training institutions seeking approval of courses leading to certification as an RFPNW must provide the following information about the seagoing service required for graduates of the special training:

- a. Length of the seagoing service. The STCW requires that the minimum length of seagoing training be at least two months; it may be longer. The length of required sea service for each program will depend upon: the number of contact hours of the special training, the types of any simulators used in training and/or assessment, the extent of their use, the exposure of the student to shipboard installations and procedures during the training period, and the nature of the duties to be performed by the student during the period of seagoing service;

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- b. Nature of the training that will be conducted during the approved sea going service;
 - c. Assessments that the student must successfully complete during the period of seagoing service; and
 - d. Performance standards to be used for the assessments.
4. Upon completion of the special training, the graduate must be provided with a copy of the assessments that must be completed during the period of required sea service and with guidance about the vessels upon which the required sea service must be performed. Unless otherwise accepted by the Coast Guard, 50% of the required seagoing service must be on vessels of 500 GT or more, and all of the service must be performed on seagoing vessels that would be accepted towards qualification as an able seaman. The training provider must also provide a profile about the qualifications of those who may:
- a. Oversee and conduct the at-sea training period; and
 - b. Conduct the assessments of the mariner's practical demonstrations of skills.
5. The Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC) was requested to provide their recommendations on the standards for vessels and simulators to be used to train and/or assess candidates for certification as an RFPNW. Enclosure 1 is a summary of MERPAC's recommendations. Further information on the use of simulators or the approval of a course to meet the requirements for certification as an RFPNW is available from Mr. John Bobb of the National Maritime Center's STCW Implementation Team at 202-493-1015. This policy letter is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/marpers/pag/policy.htm>.

M. S. BOOTHE

Encl: (1) MERPAC Recommendations

Dist: Commandant (G-MSO)
All District Commanders (m)
All COs MSOs.
All Activity Commanders
All RECs

MERPAC RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SPECIFICATIONS FOR
SIMULATORS TO BE USED TO TRAIN AND/OR ASSESS APPLICANTS FOR
CERTIFICATION AS AN RFPNW

1. Fifty percent of the training should be on a vessel of over 100 GRT.
2. If the assessments are to be conducted on a vessel of less than 200 GRT, the vessel must:
 - a. Be arranged to permit a candidate to steer by a fixed object or by ranges;
 - b. Have a magnetic compass and a gyrocompass. The compasses (or their repeaters) must be divided into one degree increments that change readings as the heading changes (digital readout is not acceptable);
 - c. Be arranged so the helmsman may steer either by the magnetic compass or the gyro compass (or repeater);
 - d. Have a rudder angle indicator and a rudder order indicator;
 - e. Have a realistic steering stand(s) replicating those found on modern merchant vessels which permits switching the steering gear between hand-steering and gyro-steering and which also allows the switching of steering motors/pumps;
 - f. Be capable of simulating steering failure including the failure of control and actuator systems;
 - g. Have sufficient behavioral realism to allow candidates to exhibit the required competencies;
 - h. Be capable of simulating failure of the gyro compass; and
 - i. Be equipped with the steering alarms required on a vessel greater than 200 GRT.
3. If a simulator will be used to assess the competencies pertaining to steering the ship and complying with helm orders in the English language as required by the STCW Code Table A-II/4, it must:
 - a. Have a visual scene that permits a candidate to steer by a fixed object or a range;
 - b. Have a magnetic compass and a gyrocompass. The compasses (or their repeaters) must be divided into one degree increments that change readings as the simulated heading changes (digital readout is not acceptable);
 - c. Be capable of being steered using either the magnetic or the gyro compass (or repeater);

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- d. Have a rudder angle indicator and a rudder order indicator that responds appropriately to the motions of the helm and rudder;
 - e. Replicate the hydrodynamic properties of vessels of at least 200 GRT throughout a realistic range of speeds and drafts;
 - f. Have a realistic steering stand(s) replicating those found on modern merchant vessels which permits switching the steering gear between hand-steering and gyro-steering and which also allows the switching of steering motors/pumps;
 - g. Be capable of simulating steering failure including the failure of control and actuator systems;
 - h. Have sufficient behavioral realism to allow candidates to exhibit the required competencies;
 - i. Be capable of simulating failure of the gyro compass; and
 - j. Be equipped with the steering alarms required on a vessel greater than 200 GRT.
4. If the simulator will be used for lookout training and/or assessment, it must also:
- a. Provide a visual scene from dead ahead to two points abaft the beam on either side; and
 - b. Have the capability of producing appropriate sounds within the same arc as the visual scene.